

Television Choices

Analog Cable TV - Consumers can choose to receive their television stations via a traditional analog cable signal. No converter box is typically needed and the cost is lower than digital TV. However, there are fewer channel choices, and the picture and sound quality is inferior to digital cable TV.

Digital Cable TV - For an additional cost, a digital signal provides better picture clarity and sound quality than an analog signal. Cable companies provide the digital converter box, a special television is not needed to view digital TV.

HDTV - For an additional cost, High Definition Television (HDTV) provides six times better picture quality than an analog signal. Cable companies provide the HDTV converter box needed, and consumers will need to purchase an HDTV-ready set.

Internet Technologies

Broadband Service is faster than traditional dial-up service. Broadband allows you to connect to the Internet via a cable modem or DSL modem. Broadband greatly reduces the amount of time it takes to receive (download) and send (upload) information. Providers offer broadband service at differing levels of speed, and different costs.

For More Information on Connecting Your Home

**Department of
Cable Communications
and Consumer Protection**
703-222-8435, TTY 711
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/consumer

Channel 16
“Connecting Your Home”
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/cable
for dates and times

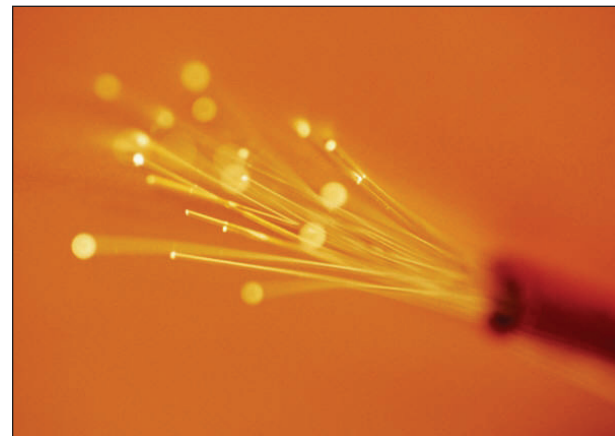
Comcast of Virginia, Inc.
703-841-7700
www.comcast.com

Cox Communications, Inc.
703-378-8422
www.cox.com/fairfax

Verizon Virginia, Inc.
1-888-553-1555
www.verizon.com

To request this information in an alternate format,
call the Department of Cable Communications
and Consumer Protection
at 703-222-8435, TTY 711.

CONNECTING YOUR HOME



How to Choose Telephone, Cable Television and Internet Services



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Making a Choice

The communications industry is making significant technological advances that result in more choices for consumers. These new technologies have enabled cable television and telephone companies to offer more than their traditional services. Consumers can now get cable TV, telephone and high speed Internet from more than one provider. But how do you choose?

There are three major competing providers in Fairfax County – Comcast, Cox and Verizon. All three providers offer cable TV, telephone and Internet services – often called the “triple play.” By ordering all three services from one provider you can save money and consolidate your bills. Is this the right choice for you?

The Department of Cable Communications and Consumer Protection and the Consumer Protection Commission would like to help you understand these new offerings so you can make informed choices for your cable television, telephone and Internet services.

Telephone Choices

Whether you have cordless phones or hardwired phones in your home, your voice is transmitted to and from your home in one of two ways:

Traditional Voice (Circuit Switched) uses a dedicated line connected by switches to the person you’re calling.

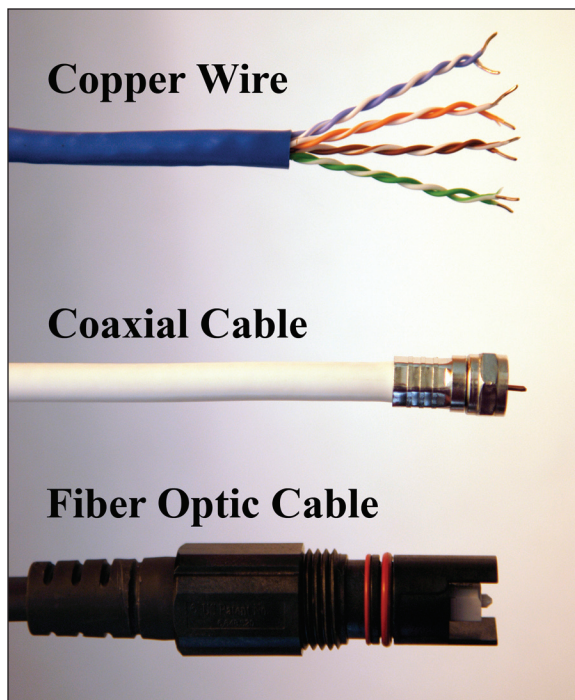
Voice over Internet Protocol or VoIP (Packet Switched) uses a data network to send small addressed “voice packets” to the person you’re calling.

If a provider uses VoIP on its own network to send the voice packets, the quality of the call is uniformly maintained because it allows the provider to prioritize voice packets so that they arrive on time. Otherwise, data on the network could delay the voice packets and result in poor call quality.

If VoIP uses the public Internet, the quality of the call may not always be uniformly maintained because the provider has less control of the voice packets competing with data packets.

Power Issues and Telephones

These services can be connected to your home in one of four ways: copper wire, coaxial cable, fiber optic cable, or a hybrid of fiber optic and coaxial cables.



Regardless of the type of connection, power is needed to make calls. For traditional voice lines power comes from the service provider. For other types of phone service backup power can come from a battery backup at your home or from a generator within the providers’ network. Home-based batteries may be supplied by the provider and will be located either inside or outside your home. Home-based batteries located inside your home must be maintained by you. Home-based batteries last about four to eight hours. Additional battery backup in your home, such as an Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS), may be supplied by you.

Provider backup power located within the network may not last during an extended power outage. With VoIP services that work over a providers’ own network, you may not have phone service during an extended power outage.

Keep in mind that if you’re using a cordless telephone that needs to be plugged into an electrical outlet, it will not work during a power outage.

911 and E911 Issues

Unless you have traditional voice service or backup power for other types of telephone service you will not be able to dial 911 in the event of a power outage. If you have VoIP service and the broadband connection is lost or interrupted, you will not be able to dial 911.

Also, Enhanced 911 (E911) allows emergency authorities to locate a 911 caller by linking the caller’s telephone number to the caller’s registered address. If you have a VoIP service and you move the VoIP telephone adapter, you must register your new address with the provider so your 911 calls can be correctly routed.